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Chairman: Mr. de Rojas ..... (Venezuela)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 95: Macroeconomic policy questions (*continued*)

(b) Trade and development (*continued*)

Panel Discussion: Havana plus 50: New challenges for the international trading system

1. **The Chairman** said that the Committee would conduct its second informal panel discussion with the Trade and Development Board in Geneva, by video conference, to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Employment and the Havana Charter for an International Trade Organization which had led to the establishment of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the forerunner of the current World Trade Organization (WTO).

2. A film from the United Nations archives reporting on the Havana Conference was projected.

3. *The meeting was suspended at 10.30 a.m. and resumed at 12.35 p.m.*

Agenda item 12: Report of the Economic and Social Council (A/52/3, A/52/175-E/1997/75, A/52/203-E/1997/85, A/52/212, A/52/222, A/52/354, A/C.2/52/5, E/1997/49, E/1997/INF/3/Add.1)

4. **Mr. Khan** (Department of Economic and Social Affairs), introducing the report of the Economic and Social Council (A/52/3), said that the Council had made significant progress, as the report showed, in making its work more effective. The milestones of that progress included the following: the length of the session had been reduced from seven weeks to four, the agenda had been streamlined, the thematic approach had resulted in a clearly visible outcome and the impact of the Council's work on the United Nations system had been enhanced through the adoption of agreed conclusions.

5. Areas still in need of improvement included oversight of subsidiary bodies and harmonization of their work plans. The selection of themes for the high-level segment would require more thought and care, and pre-session consultations were needed in order to prepare the groundwork for the agreed conclusions. There was also a need for more true dialogue between members and fewer formal statements. Both the operational activities and the general segments could be strengthened and used more effectively, in line with the guidance provided in General Assembly resolution 50/227. Harmonization of the work of the subsidiary bodies was a key aspect calling for greater attention.

6. To highlight some elements of the work of the Council reflected in its report, the Secretary-General's report on new and innovative ideas for generating funds for globally agreed commitments and priorities (A/52/203-E/1997/85) was before the Committee, which had the task of deciding how to go forward in that area. With regard to the Joint and Co-sponsored United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, the Council had asked the Secretary-General to take a more active role. Accordingly, he had attended the recent meeting of the coordinating committee for the programme, thus demonstrating the progress taking place at the highest political level as well as the substantive level. In the area of informatics, a joint project of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) was aimed at providing universal access to telecommunications technology. Finally, more progress was needed on the implementation of resolution 50/227.

7. **Mr. Kamando** (United Republic of Tanzania), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that he welcomed the outcome of the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council but regretted that the four weeks allotted to it had not allowed for in-depth consideration of most agenda items. The documentation situation had improved somewhat, but documents for the general segment still experienced delays. The Secretariat should strictly adhere to the six-week rule to enable the Council to fulfil its mandate.

8. The Group of 77 and China welcomed the Secretary-General's recommendations on strengthening the Council's role and improving its performance, especially the proposal to establish a secretariat to support it. Bringing together the requisite expertise to deal with the key policy and economic issues would be a challenge, however.

9. Regarding the subsidiary bodies of the Council, it was hard to accept the decision to discontinue the Committee for Development Planning. Its replacement by specialized ad hoc panels would not provide the necessary continuity or integrated approach to development. Such panels could, however, play a useful role in providing expertise to the proposed Council secretariat, working in close collaboration with the proposed Strategic Planning Unit in the Office of the Secretary-General.

10. In response to the problem of where to place the key areas of science and technology and energy and natural resources within the United Nations system, the Secretary-General had recommended that the work of the Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development and the Committee on Natural

Resources should be consolidated into the Commission on Sustainable Development. He had also recommended that the Commission on Science and Technology for Development should become a subsidiary body of the UNCTAD Trade and Development Board, rather than a functional commission of the Economic and Social Council. Those proposals had already been rejected by the Group of 77 and China during the substantive session of the Council, as such institutional measures would not help to resolve the problems arising from the current structure in those areas. The reform of the subsidiary bodies of the Council should be discussed in accordance with resolution 50/227.

11. **Mr. Meyer** (Luxembourg), speaking on behalf of the European Union and its associated countries Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia, as well as Cyprus and Liechtenstein, said that it welcomed the consensus which had emerged in Geneva. He noted in particular the agreed conclusions on fostering an enabling environment for development, freshwater and mainstreaming the gender perspective, and the action taken on follow-up of major international conferences, the Joint and Co-sponsored United Nations Programme on Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS), financing of operational activities and informatics.

12. The European Union had participated actively in the debate on the review of the subsidiary organs of the Council, and looked forward to seeing what approach the General Assembly would take to the reform proposals as a whole.

13. **Mr. Nebenzia** (Russian Federation) said that the second phase of the Secretary-General's reform proposals had made an impact both on procedures and on the decisions adopted at the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council. There had been a lively dialogue during the high-level segment between the Council and the heads of multilateral trade and financial institutions. His delegation, however, questioned the value of adopting agreed conclusions, as great effort went into their drafting but they were not put to use; a President's summary might be sufficient. On the positive side, one of the most important decisions by the Council had been the establishment of the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests.

14. The dialogue on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/227 had been useful, and his delegation would continue to work towards its implementation in the context of the Secretary-General's proposed reforms. The agenda of the general segment required further streamlining to avoid duplicating the work of the Second and Third Committees. As a step in that direction, his delegation called for support of its draft resolution on the proclamation of international years, which had been deferred to the resumed substantive session.

15. With regard to the Secretary-General's reform proposals, his delegation saw no advantage to splitting the annual session of the Council into "mini-sessions" during the year; the implementation of that recommendation might entail the loss of the emerging comprehensive approach in the economic and social fields. It welcomed the recommendation to expand the operational activities segment, but not at the expense of other segments, and the proposal for a separate segment to review emergency humanitarian assistance.

16. **Mr. Winnick** (United States of America) said that his delegation agreed that the 1997 high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council had been particularly fruitful. The presence of the heads of United Nations funds and programmes had also led to a productive dialogue during the operational activities segment. In particular, the work on mainstreaming of a gender perspective had major significance for the United Nations system and beyond. With regard to the work of the regional economic commissions, each of which had begun its own internal reform process, the importance of the Council as the coordinating body should be highlighted. It was also at the leading edge of coordination in the follow-up of global conferences. Although his delegation's resolution on participation by non-governmental organizations had not met with support, the debate had at least been reopened and would be continued in 1998. The Council's work on informatics was of particular importance in setting the pattern for addressing information and development issues.

17. Although there had been much progress, certain areas of the Council's work needed more attention. The coordination role of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) for the subsidiary bodies was growing, yet there was no effective mechanism for interaction between States members of the Council and ACC. The proposed meeting between the Bretton Woods institutions and the Council was potentially fruitful and should be pursued. The Council should also foster dialogue and deliberation, rather than following a pattern of set, formal statements. A more active Bureau that would meet year-round was also needed. He endorsed the statement of the representative of Tanzania concerning the documentation required in order to enable the Council to do its job properly.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.